

Weekly Column for June 23, 2005

It's getting towards the end of June and that can mean only one thing- the filing of the Annual Report with the New York State Comptroller's Office. Ok, pardon my sarcasm for a moment, but there is some exciting news to report in that financial disclosure.

Despite record increases in retirement and health care costs, as well as annual contractual raises that amounted to a jump in more than \$3 million for the 2005 budget, we finished the 2004 calendar year with a modest unreserved fund balance of \$989,324.

The reasons for being able to achieve such wonderful status are simple in thinking, yet offer a much more difficult implementation. One of the first things this administration did after taking office was to take a look at financial situation and come up with a plan to make sure the City of Troy moved along a solid financial path in the coming years. Immediately it became clear that in 2005 we would have a budget gap of \$3 to \$5 million, and that expenses in 2004 would also be cutting it close.

So we cut. First we asked all department heads to cut 3.5 percent out of their budget. To their credit, the employees in the City of Troy picked up the slack and did just that. After that we cut unneeded, white-collar, political patronage positions. Nine of them all told. These were not police officers, fireman or laborers. Instead they offered titles like Financial Management Specialist, Ombudsman, and Policy Analyst. With benefits and salary, these jobs were costing Troy more than \$500,000 per year. All of those jobs are gone, and City Hall is functioning just fine.

It is with much satisfaction that we announced on Thursday that the City had a healthy surplus from 2004. It is with even more satisfaction that I can tell you with all honesty that not only did we accomplish that task; we did so without decreasing services. In fact, I feel that services have increased.

Make no mistake that we do still face uncertain and challenging fiscal tasks in the near future. Our retirement costs, health care and contractual raises continue to rise at extraordinary levels. However, it is fair to say that we are doing all we can here to ensure that the taxpayer does not feel the burden of these costs.

So please, spread the news that Troy is continuing its comeback. This is news that can only strengthen our growing image as a place to do business in the future, as a wonderful place to live and work, and as a destination in the Northeastern United States.

In a closing note, it is going to be ridiculously hot this weekend, so be careful, and enjoy the last weekend in June.

Have a great weekend.

Mayor Harry J Tutunjian